

CFP Semifinal at the Rose Bowl Game presented by Capital One: Alabama vs Notre Dame

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Tommy Kraemer

Notre Dame Fighting Irish

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with offensive lineman Tommy Kraemer.

Q. Coach talked about not meeting the standard against Clemson. How does the offensive line kind of use that and say, all right, let's do A, B, C better and play to our standard against Alabama on Friday?

TOMMY KRAEMER: It just comes back to the details. You know, it's not one thing or two things. It's just being detailed in everything we do, whether it's watching a little bit more film or getting a little bit more drills after practice.

It always comes down to the details and our position. I think we've done a great job this week, and we'll continue doing it moving forward.

Q. I wanted to see kind of how debilitating or tough it was to come back from the appendectomy surgery. I had it myself but I didn't have to do anything for like a month. So I wanted to see how that process was for you.

TOMMY KRAEMER: Yeah, it was really weird. I felt like it got to a point in the season where I was really rolling and I think I was feeling really good. Then all of a sudden it just kind of hit.

And then afterwards it was a little challenging to get some core strength back and stuff like that because they had to go through my stomach. But I think I'm 100 percent now. Those couple of weeks was a little weird getting all that back, getting back into shape and moving around. But our medical team did an awesome job. I feel 100 percent now.

Q. Wondering, as you look back on this season, with all the protocols and all the restrictions and things along those lines, what did you miss? What were the tougher things that maybe you had to sacrifice and



give up to play ball this year?

TOMMY KRAEMER: Honestly, probably the camaraderie and brotherhood. It's just different. I think it could be stronger in some ways. But it's not the traditional offseason where we could hang out all the time, have barbecues or go to a coach's house. It just didn't work like that.

You build brotherhood -- I've said this to some other guys -- you build brotherhood through work. You saw Kyren running sprints on the field, stuff like that, you just know that these guys have your back and that's how you really build that bond, where it was different offseason -- you couldn't hang out, do stuff like that. So the brotherhood had to really be built on the field and in the facility.

Q. Wonder if you could tell us a little bit about losing Jarrett Patterson. What did he do? What improvements had you seen him make in his time at center that you guys depended on and then suddenly that were gone when he suffered his injury?

TOMMY KRAEMER: We all know Jarrett is an unbelievable player. He's an unbelievable communicator. He points everything out really well. He really is the captain of the offensive line when it comes to that aspect of communication and everything.

So that was definitely hard losing a guy like that. But Jarrett off the field is just as good as he is on the field. He's done a great job with the guys that are battling in the center position. He's done a great job with everyone else with communication. He's been in all the meetings, done everything he could, which shows how strong of a character a guy like that has. We missed Jarrett on the field but he's been an unbelievable teammate off the field.

Q. What was your biggest takeaway from the last time you guys played in a semifinal two years ago against Clemson, and what's changed the most since then?

TOMMY KRAEMER: I think the biggest takeaway is that we can win these games. And I think just hard work and everything we do together is what puts us in these



situations. I think we're all really excited for this opportunity and ready to take it to 'em.

Q. From I guess the first Clemson game to the second Clemson game, are there a couple of details you would point to and say this was what we were on it in game one and maybe a little off in game two, and how much is that sort of an emphasis of these three weeks to get cleaned up for Alabama?

TOMMY KRAEMER: I don't necessarily know if we were missing details. I think we were still on all our stuff. There were a few things here and there. We could have played a little more physical up front, but we learned from it. We're moving on and ready to take that to Alabama.

Q. We heard you guys a lot earlier in the season talk about the outside zone and how that seems to fit you guys as an offensive line and rushing operation really well. What do you think has made it fit you as a unit well and to the point where at least in November you were able to go up against a defense like Clemson's and run the ball on a team like that?

TOMMY KRAEMER: Honestly, I think it first starts with our coaching staff. We have a phenomenal coaching staff that do a great job of putting us in the best situations.

And secondly, probably our backs. We had the best backs we've had since I've been here. They make the offensive line right. If there's a situation where we're not in the best position, they cut back and burst really long runs.

So I think it really boils down to those two things. We have a great coaching staff and awesome backs who put us in the right position.

Q. What has your time in Notre Dame meant to you? And to add on to that, what does it mean for you to represent Notre Dame?

TOMMY KRAEMER: My time at Notre Dame has been phenomenal. These past five years I've built some of the best friendships and met some of the best people I ever could have imagined. It's been so special.

And then moving forward, to represent this great university and the great people that I've met throughout here is special and something you can't take lightly.

There's a lot of people who have made me who I am that watch me on Saturdays. So I'm really excited to go out there for them, and I have done that all season and throughout my career here. But it's a very special place.

Q. Kind of talking about Patterson a little bit. What are some of the challenges of bringing, I guess, two centers along and one who hasn't played a ton in Zeke? Obviously that's not easy, but what can you do to kind of help them out?

TOMMY KRAEMER: I think the main thing is just overcommunicate. Just pointing out things, helping them out in any way we can, seeing different stances in defensive linemen, different weight, anything we can. And then off the field, watching extra film with them, the guards and the tackles, everyone getting together and honing down the communication aspect.

I think that's honestly the biggest thing in the center position, is communication and making sure we're all going to the right place and seeing everything through one set of eyes.

Q. I wanted to ask you about Alabama's defensive line. They seem like they've made some progress through the year, and specifically about the edge rusher, Will Anderson Jr., the freshman?

TOMMY KRAEMER: They have a very good defensive line, linebacking corps. They're big, strong, tough. No. 31 is a good player. Has speed, can make some moves out there.

But it's nothing we haven't seen thus far. We're preparing to play the best every day. And that's what we're ready for this upcoming Friday. We're excited to get after them. They have a great team, but we have a greater line. It's going to be a great battle.

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